

Today

- A toolbox for actually writing interesting stories.
- Continuing on your own stories.

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Puritan Widow.

More Tragedy.

Tragedy of Locrine.



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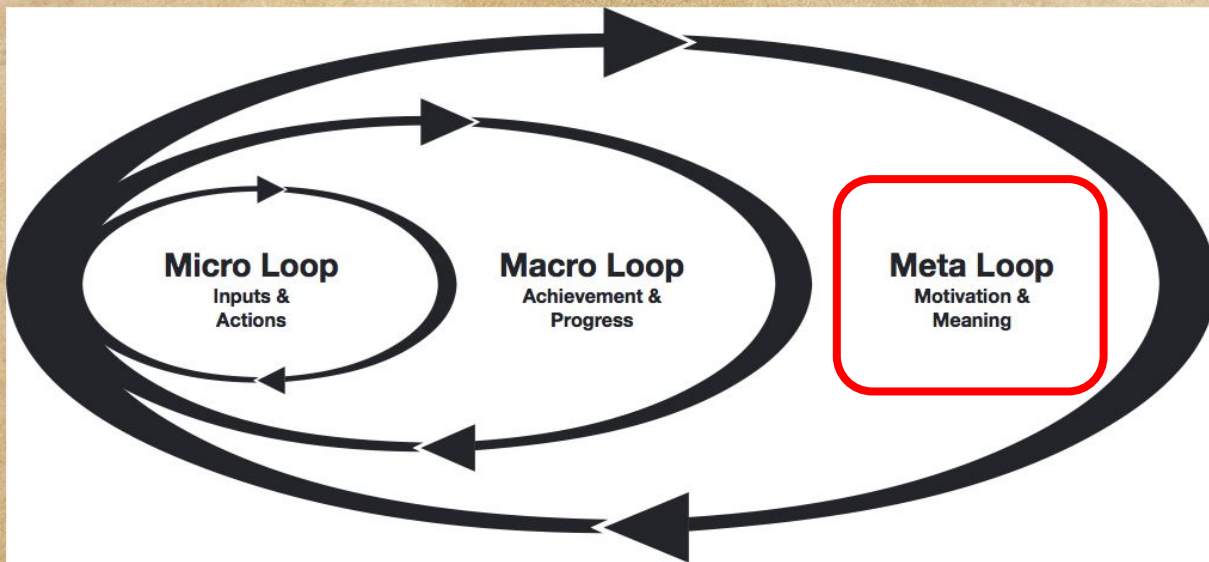
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Bartholomew the Martyr.
The Merchant of Venice.
The Tragedy of Hamlet.
The Tragedy of Locrine.

! SPOILERS !
I am warning you. This is the warning.

Why even story in games?

- Give context
- Provides reason to continue



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of Tyre.

Prodigall.

of Thomas La Cromwell.

the Lord Cobham.

Widow.

Tragedy.

of Locrine.

We have another unique feature as game developers...

We can quite literally put our players in someone else's (virtual) shoes.



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...Which is a great way to build empathy

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Henry the Eighth.

Richard the Third.

The Comedy of Locrine.

*If we want players to remember our game,
having a strong story is a way we can be truly meaningful
to others.*

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Interplay

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Message

What are you actually trying to say?

- Not all games need a message. But when they do, it often becomes extra strong.
- A good story is more than just “Person N did X and then Y happened.”
- It sends a message to the player/reader/viewer.

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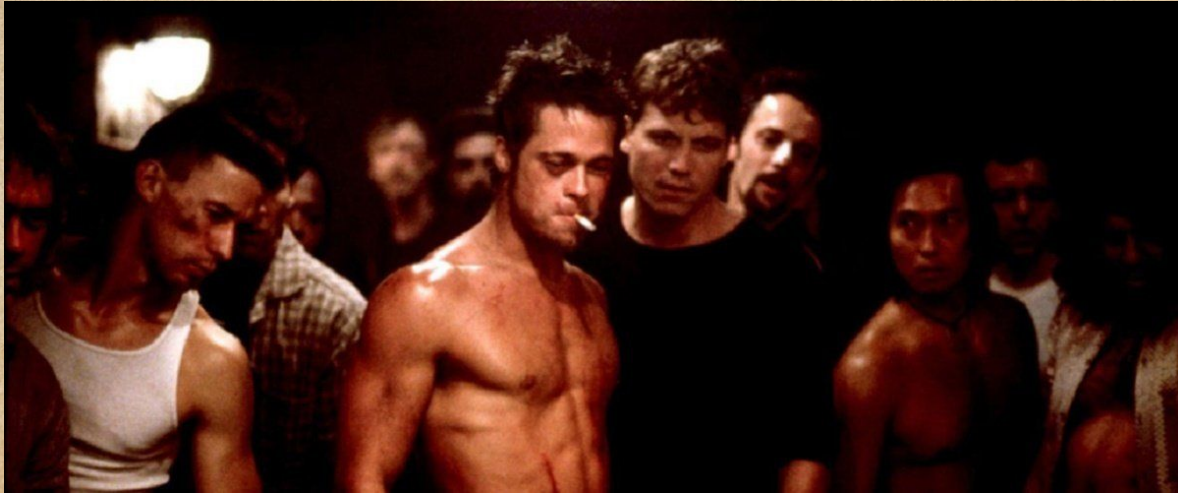
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- What is Fight Club about?
 - A bunch of guys who start an underground fight club, and turn it into a terrorist group.
- Is it, though?
 - Central themes are consumerism, and masculinity.
 - Some make the point that it's not until the narrator lets go of his destructive, hypermasculine side (Tyler Durden) that he can embrace his sensitive, loving side and be with Marla.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Td88z08a_4c

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The Tragedy of Coriolanus.

The Tragedy of Cymbeline.

The Tragedy of Titus Andronicus.

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar.

The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra.

The Tragedy of Troilus and Cressida.

The Tragedy of Timon of Athens.

The Tragedy of The Winter's Tale.

The Tragedy of The Tempest.

The Tragedy of The Merchant of Venice.

The Tragedy of The Two Gentlemen of Verona.

The Tragedy of The Comedy of Errors.

The Tragedy of The Merry Wives of Windsor.



Zootopia



NEWS: Crime rate continues to drop



Reader



Listener



Insider

CASSANDRA WATERGATE

ORWELL-ID 252-68-093

Date of Birth September 13, 1992

Address

Occupation Artist

Relationship in a relationship



PROFILE

ACTIVITIES

takes anti-depressant "Metharin"

gets on bus on the Freedom Plaza every day

CHAT

INCOMING SESSION

Apr 13

Cassandra Watergate 4 min ago
what i did

Juliet Kerrington 4 min ago
Cassi, what happened there wasn't your fault!



Cassandra Watergate 4 min ago
how can it not have been my fault?? juliet! i smashed the freaking skull of a father of two children!



Juliet Kerrington 4 min ago
Cassi, you did that to save me. And you succeeded! Don't



Cassandra Watergate

CONFLICTING UPDATE

CASSANDRA WATERGATE

injured a police officer to protect Juliet Kerrington

RELATED PROFILES UPDATE

JULIET KERRINGTON
 was protected from a police officer by Cassandra Watergate

DISABLE

There is a conflict with another datachunk in: "a communication".

SHOW CONFLICT



Cassandra Watergate 4 min ago
i feel like an asshole

Session closed.

Orwell: Keeping an Eye On You

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Tone

What's the **tone** of your game?

- Funny?
- Realistic?
- Gritty?
- Scary?
- Satirical?
- Friendly?
- etc

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Batman

VS.



Batman



Batman

VS.



Deadpool

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Overwatch

VS.



Call of Duty: Black Ops 3

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Minecraft: Story Mode

VS.



The Wolf Among Us

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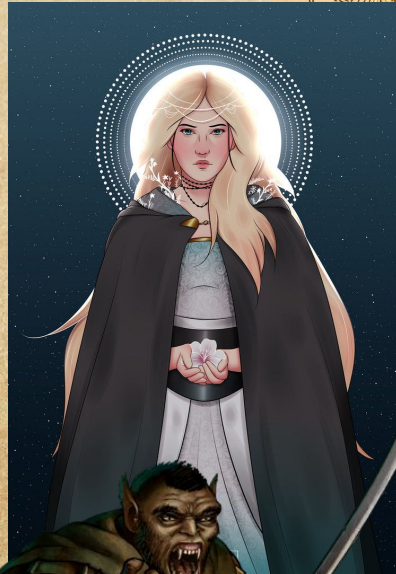
Measure for Measure Tragedy.

The Tragedy of Locrine.

World building

The when, where and how

- Time period
- Geographic zone
 - Weather
 - Landscape
 - Flora & fauna
- Character archetypes
 - Races
 - Professions
- Religion & world views
- Political system
- Social structures
- etc



Example: Pendula Swing

- Baseline - Inspired by Ireland (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxLtDNGq1A4>)
- Climate is temperate oceanic climate, which helps with flora & fauna.
- Belief system lends themes from Irish/Celtic mythology.
- Point of game - use tropes to talk about prejudice.
 - We need different races to discuss the topic
 - Fantasy races used in RPGs are perfect
 - Humans, elves, dwarves, orcs, goblins, and giants
- Social structures include the class system we have - only more intense, and obviously racist.
- Cities are divided into richer, newer areas and poorer areas that have not changed much since the equivalent of the Middle Ages.

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Example: Pendula Swing

Mythology

Created by Anna Jenelius, last modified on Apr 03, 2018



The Tale of the Beginnings, and the Creation of the Races

Time began when a vast stone was cast down from the heavens. On it were the twin daughters of the sun and the moon, called Táua and Denánn, and they were fighting for the right to be the ruler of the world. The stone landed in the endless seas, and became the continent we now live on.

Denánn was the smaller of the two, with dark hair, smooth skin, and quick feet. She was the favorite of their father, the moon. Táua was taller and stronger, with fair hair covering most of her body. Their mother, the sun, considered her the apple of her eye.

The two sisters fought tooth and nail for three hundred years, until they finally agreed that they could not decide the winner by measuring force. Denánn was no match for Táua's strength - but Táua could rarely land a blow due to Denánn's superior agility. Instead, they would match their power to create.

Denánn made the first creatures, who were not unlike herself in form. She called them the Neimed, and she made three of them. Their names were Nakirik, Arénn, and Kassair. Táua, seeing what her sister had done, created three Faemores by the names of Finiann, Naery, and Fanónn. Together, the Neimed and the Faemores were often called The First.



Denánn then created Giants, and Táua Elves. Denánn made Orcs, and then Táua made Dwarves. Finally, Denánn created Goblins, and Táua made Humans. For each new creature, the sisters were weakened, which granted each creation less power and shorter lives. They were however - unlike the Neimed and the Faemores - given the power to reproduce on their own.

When they were finally done, the two sisters withdrew to rest. Denánn took refuge in the darkness of the vast seas, and Táua went up into the distant mountains of the new lands. It is said that when they return, it will be decided which one of them shall rule the world for the rest of time.

Since they were the first to be created by divine forces, the Neimed and the Faemores possessed the power to create lesser beings. The Neimed went on to fill the sea with Fish and the caves with Snakes and Lizards. Meanwhile, the Faemores made Birds, Critters and Deer to fill the fields and forests.

As nature around them grew more and more hospitable, the six other races started dividing the lands between them. Humans, being the boldest of the races and fast to reproduce, quickly claimed rights to the fertile plains. Their cousins, the elves, settled in the light summer forests, whereas the orcs made the evergreen woods of the north their home. Giants claimed the mountains, and the dwarves everything underground. Goblins were satisfied with bogs and swamps. And for many years, all was well.

The Tale of the First Great Conflict

As time went on, rivalry started brewing between the creations that traced their lineage to Denánn and those who traced it to Táua. Humans, eager to expand into new territories, were more and more often found in the realms of the other races. Dwarves and elves greeted them as kin - but the giants, orcs and goblins were less welcoming. They started fortifying their homes, and threatened any humans who dared venture too close to them with violence.

Example: Pendula Swing

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Example: Pendula Swing



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This helps you make decisions further on

“Let’s make a Viking style character?”

“Well, it really doesn’t fit in our world...”

“What if we expand the map to the north?”

“Dude, our game takes place in the 1940s.”

“Soo... A Viking with a Tommy gun?”

“...Awesome.”

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Lore

- Mythos & religion
 - How was the world created?
 - Is this a religious world?
 - In that case, who is the god/the gods?
 - Do the god(s) *actually exist*?
 - Are there any legendary heroes everyone knows about?
 - Are there conflicts between people who believe in different things?
- Superstition
 - What do the “common folk” believe at home?
 - Is there a difference between official religion and private belief?
- History
 - What has happened in the past?
 - How does that affect the world of today?
 - Do people in the world still hold grudges?
 - How have landscape & borders been formed by for example war?
- etc...

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Avoid info dumps

- If you create a whole religion with a bunch of stories, you'll want to share it.
- Do it carefully:
 - Do *not* dump too much lore at once.
 - Hint in conversations.
 - Lore books for those who are interested.
 - Show as much as possible *in the world*.

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The goal:

To make the world seem vast.

- There is more around every corner.
- You have thought of everything.
- This is a real world, that the players can lose themselves in.

...Even though is mostly set dressing sometimes.

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Bloodborne

Research

- It's 100% worth getting to know your source material properly.
- Example - if you make a game about Vikings:
 - Don't just look at TV series & games about Vikings.
 - Don't stop at Wikipedia.
 - There is plenty of source material out there. Find a few books, check Google Scholar!
 - Your players will know if you're done your research, or just looked at other people's work.
- There are plenty of subjects that are great to understand even for gamedevs:
 - Politics
 - Economics
 - History
 - Geography
 - Psychology
 - etc

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The Tragedy of Othello.

The Tragedy of Titus Andronicus.

The Tragedy of Troilus and Cressida.

The Tragedy of The Winter's Tale.

The Tragedy of The Two Gentlemen of Verona.

The Tragedy of The Merchant of Venice.

The Tragedy of The Murther of Titus.

The Tragedy of The Murther of Gonzago.

The Tragedy of The Murther of Caesar.

The Tragedy of The Murther of Portia.

The Tragedy of The Murther of Brutus.

The Tragedy of The Murther of Cassius.

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Dialogues

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First off...

- Dialogues will never be completely natural.
- Dialogues *should* never be completely natural.
- Human speech is very irrational and often leads nowhere
- We need to find ways of getting close to real conversations, *without mimicking them*

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Case in point - courtroom notes:

MR. ALLEN: You ain't going to tell me [REDACTED].
THE COURT: Listen.
MR. ALLEN: Suck my [REDACTED].
THE COURT: Shut up. Listen to me.
MR. ALLEN: Suck my [REDACTED], you [REDACTED].
THE COURT: Listen!
MR. ALLEN: Suck my [REDACTED].
THE COURT: You will be here in court on Mon-
MR. ALLEN: You'll be here sucking my [REDACTED].
THE COURT: You will listen to me, now.
MR. ALLEN: Go [REDACTED] yourself.
THE COURT: Okay. I'm going to tell you how this is
going to work. You either listen or not. I don't care.

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An editor would cut out ~85% of this.

<https://twitter.com/wsbvtv/status/746468470900953088>

What is the purpose of the dialogue?

- Exposition?
- Quest progression?
- Something else?

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The interface of a dialogue

How to show which options lead to exposition,
and what leads to progression?

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Kaidan: Commander. I'm glad to see you're okay. Losing Jenkins was hard on the crew. And I'm glad we didn't lose you, too.

How are you holding up?

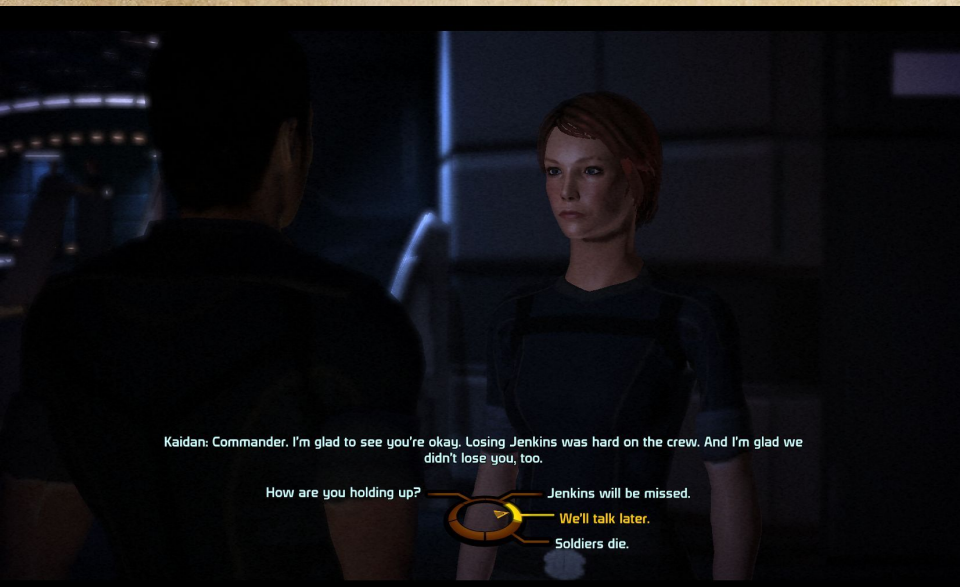
Jenkins will be missed.

We'll talk later.

Soldiers die.

Mass Effect

How to display dialog options?



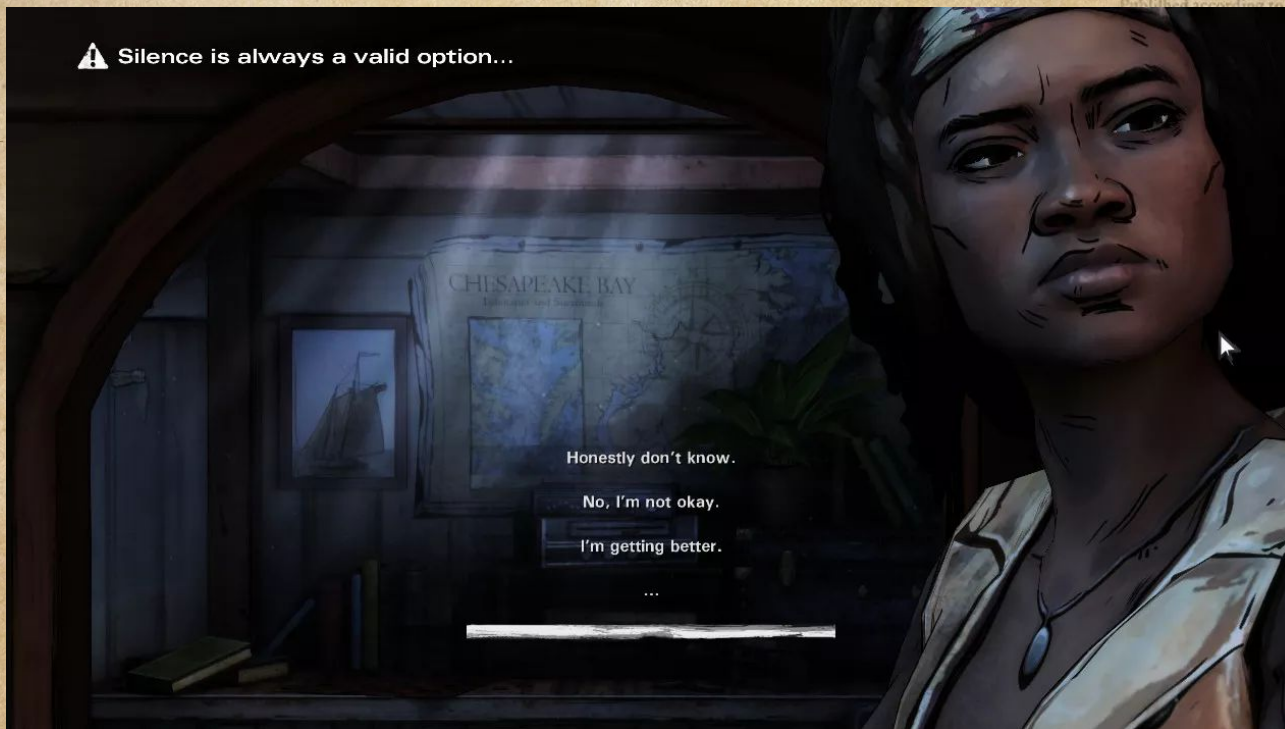
Mass Effect

VS.



Dragon Age

Timed dialog options?



Telltale's The Walking Dead: Michonne

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Lord Cobham.

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How much consequence placed in dialogs?

- If you have a story-focused game, defining choices can be made in dialogues.
- If your game focuses on gameplay, you should have the player DO things instead.

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Remember...

- The two (or more) parties of a dialog:
 - Need a distinct voice.
 - Have their own agenda.
 - Could give false information.
- Dialogues are often fun to write...
 - That does not make it easy.
 - Often a tendency to add too much flavor (“oh, umm... yeah. so...”)
 - Each line in precious. Use them well.
- Place yourself in the player’s shoes. What would they want to say?

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PAUSE

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The London Prodigall.

History of Thomas L^d Cromwell.

John Oldcastle Lord Cobham.

Puritan Widow.

More Tragedy.

Tragedy of Locrine.

Character design

There are no “Commoners” in real life

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Lord Cobham.
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Commoner-Used to be a bandit, I was. More money there than in the mines at Nashkel, that's fer sure. Probably less danger, too, from the sounds of it.

Catriona Drabinova-What's so dangerous about the Nashkel mines?

Commoner-Well, if you believed every tale you heard, you'd have to say the King of the Nine Hells himself were down at the bottom of it, smoking a pipe and making the place comfortable. To be honest, I don't know what's down there. All I know is that a lot of the folks who work in that infernal place don't ever make it back up to the surface.

END DIALOGUE

Baldur's Gate

Smaller roles

- Find their *thing*.
- What makes this particular person tick?
- What can they provide to the player?
 - Help finishing a quest?
 - “You need to find a Ruby Necklace, you say? Well, I saw one of those over at Jane’s Pawn shop the other day...”
 - Exposition?
 - “My clan’s from the north, but we were forced to move south when our lands were laid barren by years of draught...”
 - Emotional depth?
 - “We were six people, with only enough water for four. We had to decide who would not make it through the desert...”

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Larger roles

- Character sheets!
- Scribble down that makes this character special.
- Get an understanding of their background. What made them who they are?
- What drives them to do what they are doing?

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The Tragedy of Locrine.

Example: Pendula Swing

NPCs

The Template

References

Name:
Old name:
Code:
Role:
Age:
Gender:
Sexual preference:
Race:
Ethnic look:
Body type:
Family:
Disposition:
Fear:
Goal/dream:
Likes:
Dislikes:
"Us":
Primary color:
Character inspiration:
Other:

•

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key_02 - Aidan Barnes

Created by Anna Jenelius, last modified on Mar 29, 2018

The Private Investigator

References



Name: Aidan Barnes

Old name: Céthron Donu Dahánn

Code: key_02

Role: Private Investigator

Age: 270 (looks like ~30) years

Gender: Male

Sexual preference: Heterosexual, prefers dwarves

Race: Dwarf

Ethnic look: Latino

Body type: Sturdy, yet lean

Family: Mother, father and two sisters were killed by a human mob 230 years ago.

Disposition: D (extrovert, controlling)

Fear: Seeing dwarves and the other races succumb under human rule and depleted/enslaved, their cultures in ruins.

Goal/dream: To see the return of the dwarves' glory days, along with the other races.

Likes: Reading tales of old, cinema, museums, challenging investigations

Dislikes: Humans, historical revisionism, the police force

"Us": Dwarves, and to some extent the other races too

Primary color: Black, dark brown

Character inspiration: Kill, any brooding 1950s detective

Other:

- "I grew up with stories of you. Please, don't let me down."
- Wanted to be a police officer, but was refused. Blames this on racism.
- Has an obvious charm and charisma.

Filled out:

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Character Design: Tropes

What is a trope?

- Shorthand for a character, plot, or similar.
- Something we've seen before, in one shape or form.

Examples:

<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/Characters>



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Basically: Cliché

Can tropes be positive?

- *Yes!*
- Easier to get to the point of the story.
- Helps the memory.

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When to use tropes, and when not to

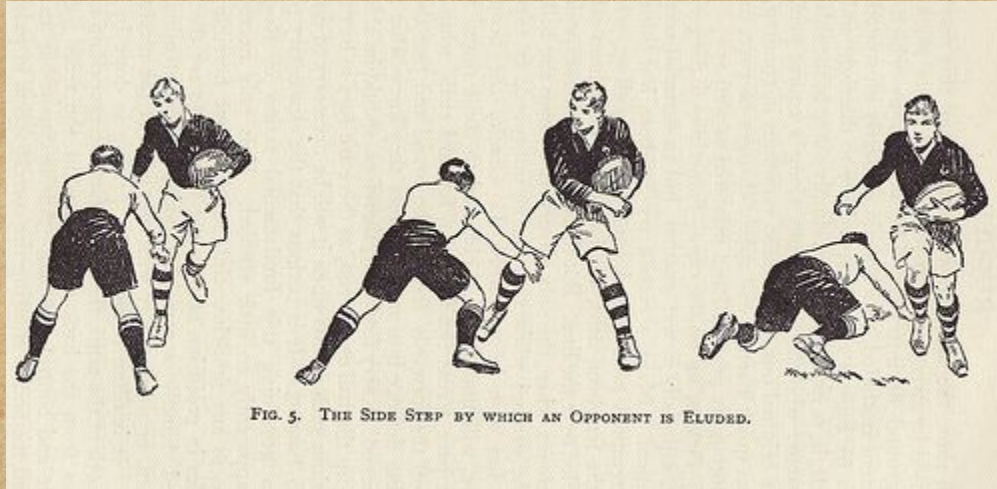
- Using similar characters and plot devices can feel tired and uninspired.
- If you write a story about a *Brooding Male Protagonist* whose *wife/daughter/family is dead* and he needs to *avenge* - ask yourself if the cliché elements are necessary.
 - If yes - go right ahead.
 - If no - *change something up!* Make your story memorable.

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Leverage a trope

Know what people expect,
and then deliberate step away from it.



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Barbanthorpe Widow.

Barbanthorpe Tragedy.

Tragedy of Locrine.

Example: Pendula Swing

The Goblin trope is savage,
and an unintelligent enemy.



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Example: Pendula Swing

In the world of Pendula, Goblins are just as intelligent and emotional as everyone else.



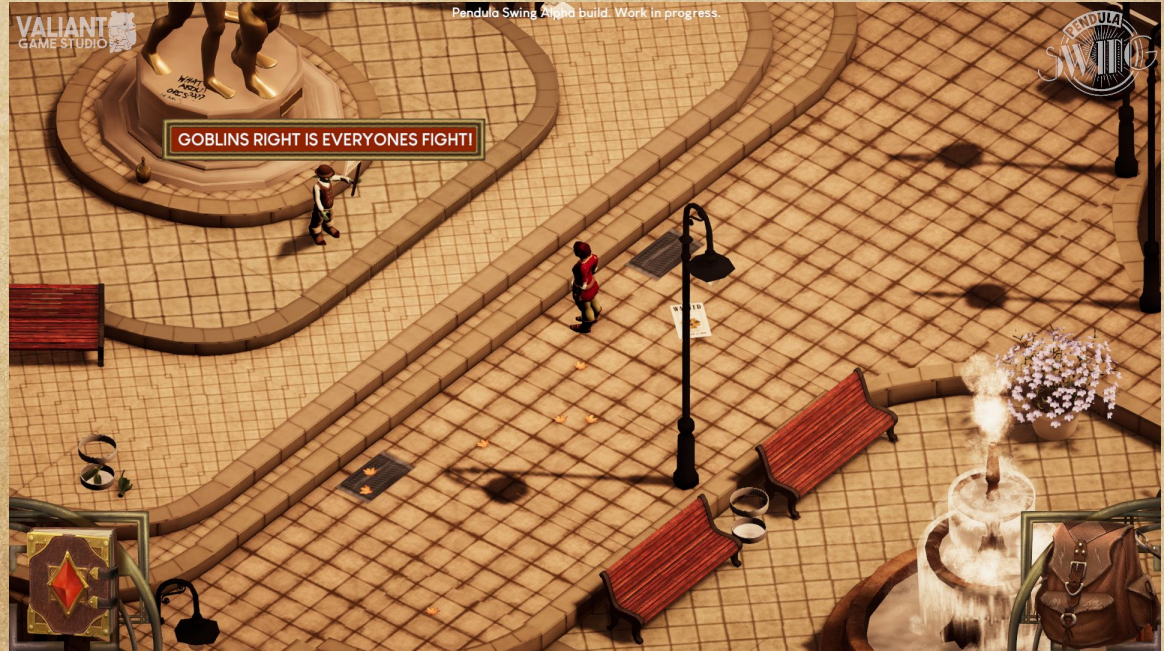
Example: Pendula Swing

We use this to talk about civil rights movements, and the suffragettes.

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Let's imagine this character!

- Man
- Human
- Ranger
- Neutral Good

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Many of you probably thought...



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How about instead...



Minsc, Baldur's Gate

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Widowes Word Gobham.

Painted Widow.

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Character design: The Hero

The main character = the player

- There is no main character - everything happens because the player says so
- Works well in puzzle games
- Often little focus on story



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Coriolanus.

Henry the Eighth.

Richard the Third.

Troilus and Cressida.

Timon of Athens.

Titus Andronicus.

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

The Winter's Tale.

Yves de Lorraine.

The Empty Shell

- The hero has no personality of their own.
- The player *is* the hero, but makes no decisions that affect the hero's place in the world.

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Bartholomew the Rhymer.

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The Tragedy of Hamlet.

Portal, Half-Life



The Hero With an Agenda

- The hero has an agenda.
- The player is mostly along for the ride, and helps them achieve their goals.

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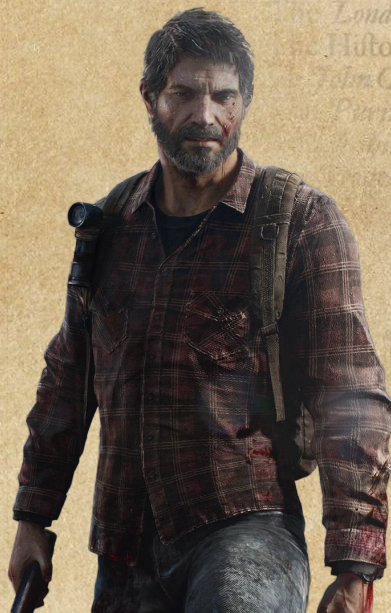
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The Last of Us, Super Mario

The RP Character

- The player molds the hero.
- Their choices and actions are reflected on how the hero looks and/or acts.



Dragon Age: Origins



Skyrim

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More examples?



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La Cromwell.

Gobham.

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Find the type of character that fits your type of game

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Lord Gobham.

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Character design: The Villain

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First off: Does your story need a villain?

CONFLICT IN LITERATURE

CLASSICAL



MAN vs. NATURE

MODERN



MAN vs. SOCIETY

POSTMODERN



MAN vs. TECHNOLOGY



MAN vs. MAN



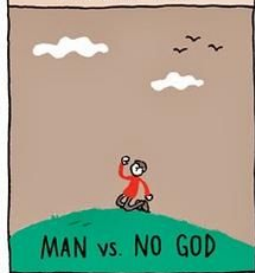
MAN vs. SELF



MAN vs. REALITY



MAN vs. GOD



MAN vs. NO GOD



MAN vs. AUTHOR

GRANT SNIDER

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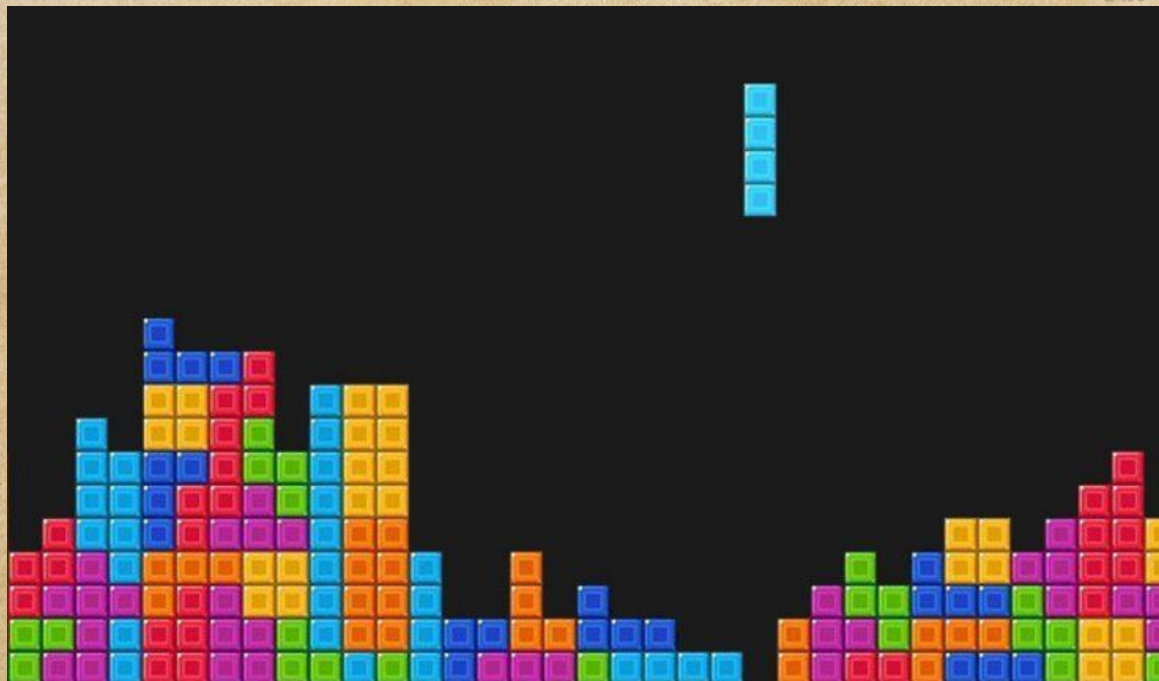
John Oldcastle Lord Cobham.

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Games, in particular, may not need villains



Tetris

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Stardew Valley

If you choose a villain, how do they match the hero?

- A strong villain is often the antithesis of the hero.
- Where the protagonist is weak, the antagonist is strong.



Batman

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Everyone is the hero of their own story

It's all just a matter of perspective.

There are always two sides to the same coin.



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What is good and evil?



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the Locrine.



(He said, and thus dealt in absolutes)

Star Wars

Games have tried to explain behavior

Lawful Good	Neutral Good	Chaotic Good
Lawful Neutral	Neutral	Chaotic Neutral
Lawful Evil	Neutral Evil	Chaotic Evil

Dungeons & Dragons

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...And we can force characters into the mold

 <p>LAWFUL GOOD "In the name of Robert of the House Baratheon, the First of His Name, Lord of the Seven Kingdoms, and Protector of the Realm, I, Eddard of the House Stark, Lord of Winterfell and Warden of the North, sanction you to die."</p>	 <p>NEUTRAL GOOD "I'm gonna find my brother. And put a sword through King Joffrey's throat."</p>	 <p>CHAOTIC GOOD "I will hurt you for this. A day will come when you think you are safe and happy, and your joy will turn to ash in your mouth. And you will know the debt is paid."</p>
 <p>LAWFUL NEUTRAL "By right and birth and blood I do this day lay claim to the Iron Throne of Westeros."</p>	 <p>TRUE NEUTRAL HODOR HODOR HODOR HODOR HODOR HODOR</p>	 <p>CHAOTIC NEUTRAL "There is a way, I think. Wasn't possible until now. It's actually quite simple, you'll only have to do one thing... you'll have to die."</p>
 <p>LAWFUL EVIL "When you play the game of thrones you win or you die. There is no middle ground."</p>	 <p>NEUTRAL EVIL "Distrusting me was the worst thing you've done since you climbed off your horse."</p>	 <p>CHAOTIC EVIL "I'll tell you what. I'm going to give you a present. After I raise my armies, and kill your father's brother, I'll give you his head as well."</p>

Game of Thrones

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But even Cersei has her reasons

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Game of Thrones

A compelling villain



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The best stories are complex

If it's easy to say what needs to be done,
the conflict might not be interesting enough.

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The Taming of the Shrew.

The Tragedy of Locrine.

Example:

It's easy to agree that Sauron is evil and needs to be stopped.

But...

- Should the Ring be hidden?
- Should the Ring be used?
- Should the Ring be destroyed?
 - Who should carry the Ring to Mordor?
 - The strong, magic Gandalf?
 - The heroic, brave Boromir?
 - The pure-hearted Frodo?
 - How do people react to Frodo being chosen?



Who's right?

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I won't let you take her. This is our future. Think of all
the lives we'll save.



The Last of Us

Are you really the good guy?

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The Wolf Among Us

Does the villain have a point?

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Daredevil

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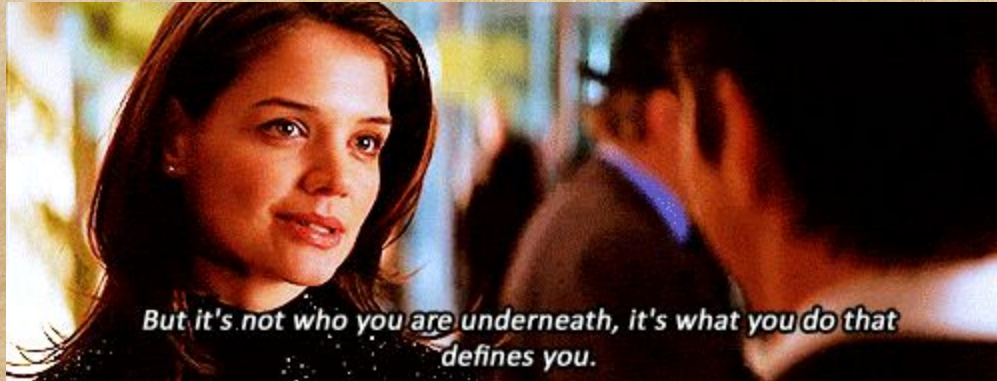
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The Tragedy.
The Tragedy of Locrine.



But it's not who you are underneath, it's what you do that
defines you.

Batman Begins

Motifs

- Avoid “evil because evil”.
- “Power” is an overused reason.
- If your villain wants power, *why?*



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*Richard III. The Tragedy of King
Oldcastle Lord Cobham.*

*Richard III. The Tragedy of King
Tragedy.*

“Don't talk like one of them. You're not! Even if you'd like to be. To them, you're just a freak, like me! They need you right now, but when they don't, they'll cast you out, like a leper! You see, their morals, their code, it's a bad joke. Dropped at the first sign of trouble. They're only as good as the world allows them to be. I'll show you. When the chips are down, these... these civilized people, they'll eat each other. See, I'm not a monster. I'm just ahead of the curve.”

https://www.reddit.com/r/FanTheories/comments/3insgr/joker_is_the_hero_in_the_dark_knight/

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Again: Everyone is the hero of their own story

A good starting point for a villain:

“If you want to make an omelette, you have to break a few eggs.”

What is the omelette, and what are the eggs?



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Even a bad guy can drop good advise



“If you’re good at something, never do it for free.”

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Plot devices

What are “Plot Devices”?

Things in the story that in one way or another move the plot forward.

Somewhat frowned upon:

Characters should drive the story, not things or events outside of their control.

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Common plot device: The MacGuffin

Hitchcock:

“It might be a Scottish name, taken from a story about two men on a train. One man says, 'What's that package up there in the baggage rack?' And the other answers, 'Oh, that's a MacGuffin'. The first one asks, 'What's a MacGuffin?' 'Well,' the other man says, 'it's an apparatus for trapping lions in the Scottish Highlands.' The first man says, 'But there are no lions in the Scottish Highlands,' and the other one answers, 'Well then, that's no MacGuffin!' So you see that a MacGuffin is actually nothing at all.”

“In fiction, a MacGuffin (sometimes McGuffin or maguffin) is a plot device in the form of some goal, desired object, or other motivator that the protagonist pursues, often with little or no narrative explanation.”

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MacGuffin>

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Examples of MacGuffins

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Transformers



The Avengers

Deus Ex Machina

A “cheap” way the hero is saved,
by something or someone not properly established in the game.

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The Hobbit

Red herrings

- Something that looks like a clue/setup, but is not.



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Example:

- In LA Noire, you have to choose which one of two suspects to put in jail.
- It later turns out both of them are innocent.



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Setup & Payoff

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n Playes, never

Cromwell.
obham.



If in the first act you have hung a pistol on the wall, then in the following one it should be fired. Otherwise don't put it there.

(Anton Chekhov)

izquotes.com

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John the Baptist.

The Merchant of Venice.

The Taming of the Shrew.

Antony and Cleopatra.

Also:
If you need a gun in an upcoming act,
put it on the wall in an earlier one.

Example: Wayne's World

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Setup



“You know - for a security guard, he had an awful lot of information. Don't you think?”



They use the information to relay a message to a record company boss.



It works!
And they live happily ever after.
(Until the sequel.)

Setup



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Wayne: Excuse me, what are you guys doing here in the middle of the street?

Chicken-man: Well, I'm putting these chickens in crates, and stacking them right here. Jim's job is to make sure we always have plenty of watermelons.

Wayne: Oh, so you're selling watermelons.

Jim: No, no sir. We just have to make sure we have plenty of them stacked at all times, just like with these here chickens.

Garth: What do these guys do?

Chicken-man: Well, their job is to walk back and forth with this big plate-glass window every couple of minutes.

Garth: Weird.

Wayne: Yeah, you've got to wonder if this is gonna pay off later on.

Payoff

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“Alright, men. Our work here is done!”

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Plot twists

A common structure:

1. You know X
2. You learn about Y
3. You realize X and Y are the same thing

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Planet of the Apes

1. Man knows about Earth
2. Man discovers Planet of Apes
3. Man realizes Planet of Apes is Earth



John Oldcastle Lord Cobham.



Fight Club

1. Man 1 is introduced
2. Man 2 is introduced
3. It turns out, Man 1 and Man 2 are the same person

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Vampire: The Masquerade - Bloodlines

1. You meet Twin 1
2. You meet Twin 2
3. It turns out, Twin 1 and 2 are the same person



R'S
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never

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Consequences

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If you have a realistic tone, consequences should match actions

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More on the Hobbit movies: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTRUQ-RKfUs>

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Workshop part 3:
Continue working on your story!

Twine:

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END OF DAY 2